

HISTORICAL REVIEW

Historical data reveal that diagnosis and treatment of pituitary gland diseases started at the end of the 19th century, followed by quite unexpected results achieved as early as the beginning of the 20th century. In 1906, Dr H. Schloffer, an Austrian surgeon, published his research, which showed that the easiest and simplest access to pituitary gland was *via* sphenoid bone. A year later, he was the first to operate on pituitary tumor successfully by transnasal trans-sphenoidal access. The method was readily adopted by other surgeons and it has been used down to the present, of course, with various technical improvements; for more than a century now, 95% of pituitary tumors located in the sellar region have been operated on by this method. As noted in our previous reviews, our physicians then studied medicine in Vienna and Graz. In 1907, Aleksandar Blašković graduated from the Vienna School of Medicine and came to our Hospital as a disciple and co-worker of our first renowned surgeons, Professors Wickerhauser, Čačković and Maček. At the time, all surgeons were involved in many different surgical disciplines, therefore being called by some authors "universal surgeons".

Owing to development of surgical techniques in the next decades, surgeons tended to engage in a particular, specialized surgical discipline. Upon taking charge of Department IV from Professor Mašek in 1919, that included dermatology, otorhinolaryngology and urology, Dr Blašković was engaged in "universal surgery". In 1922, he performed the first six operations of pituitary gland using the method introduced by Dr Schloffer 15 years before. As Dr Blašković focused his scientific interest on urology, thus being considered our first urologist, acting as head of the Department of Urology from 1928, pituitary gland operations were now performed by Dr Ante Šercer. In 1927, he published his article entitled *Kada i kako operiramo tumore hipofize* (*When and how we operate on pituitary gland tumors*) in the journal *Medicinski pregled*. Biserka



Professor Ante Šercer
(photo from 1954)



Professor Aleksandar Blašković,
founder of Croatian urology

Belicza and Živko Gnjiđić, the authors of the historical review on the diagnosis and treatment of pituitary gland tumors, published in their book *Suvremeno kirurško liječenje tumora hipofize* (*Modern Surgical Treatment of Pituitary Gland Tumors*), say that Dr Šercer was very critical in the analysis of his own results. Some of Professor Šercer's conclusions have remained relevant down to the present¹.

Ninety years have elapsed since the appearance of Professor Šercer's article and 95 years since the first pituitary gland operation performed by Dr Blašković. During this nearly 100-year period, our neurosurgeons have been employing this method, along with constant development of medicine, neuroendocrinology and neurosurgery in particular, with the only aim to help the patients live in face of their serious diagnoses and witness the excellence of our physicians and the great, long-standing tradition of work in this very complex field of medicine.

Tanja Sušec

Reference

1. Gnjiđić Ž, et al. Suvremeno kirurško liječenje tumora hipofize. Zagreb: Medicinska naklada, 2014; p. 3. (in Croatian)